

SPELLING ACTIVITIES

It has been found that children learn to spell better, quicker and more easily if they are given short but fun activities on a daily basis. Tasks that are **interactive** and can be undertaken **collaboratively** are more effective than worksheets and will lead to pupils becoming more independent and focused learners.

Below are some suggestions for spelling activities that you may wish to try out in your classroom. Some are more suited to one particular stage but others can be used in every class from P1 – P7.

Spelling Strategies

Pupils should be given **strategies** to help them learn to spell.

A list of suggested strategies is given at the end of this booklet in the secondary section.

Additional strategies could include:

- **Rhyme** – if they can spell mouse, they should be able to spell house
- Write the word with **different coloured pens** to break it into sections. This will help to teach the pupils to learn to spell in 'chunks' rather than 'letter by letter'
- Use **different coloured post-its**, one for each word. This will help pupils visualise the word when they are trying to recall it.
- Write the word in **sand, finger paint** etc –helps form memory hooks.
- Use **big paper and big felt pens** – not always a jotter.
- **Chant the syllables** eg Wed-**nes**-day, emphasising the tricky bit. Use actions for each syllable.
- **Draw a picture** to help with a word eg big elephants can always understand small elephants = because
- **Make the word into a picture** eg bed could be drawn to look like a bed

1. Look, Cover, Write, Check - TRIOS

This is often the basic method used in classes but the expectation is that the pupil will be motivated and be able to self teach. Mistakes are often written out three times and become embedded.

Try putting them in same ability trios. They check each others' lists and then swap around again so the checkers are checked!

Alternatively, the teacher shows the pupils the word, covers it and then the pupils write the word. The teacher would then show the word again for the pupils to check. Again this method has a higher success rate than when the pupils work as individuals.

2. Look, Cover, Write, Check – 'SHOW ME'

Pupils work in pairs. Both pupils look at the same word. It is then covered and both pupils write the word on an individual whiteboard. They then reveal their word - 'one two three, show me' and check that they both have the same spelling. This is repeated with every word on their list. A quick activity that is very effective, It can also be done in trios or quartets.

3. FLASH CARDS

This is similar to the 'show me' activity above. Pupils quickly write out words on flash cards making sure that they have the correct spellings. One reads aloud from a card and the other pupil writes the word on a whiteboard. This time when they say 'show me', one shows the correct spelling on the card and the other shows their attempt on the whiteboard. Pupils take turns reading or spelling.

4. DEFINITIONS

Make this exercise a more worthwhile learning experience by asking pupils to work in pairs. Pupils are given one dictionary to share and work together to find and write the definition of each word. By using a selection of dictionaries, pairs can then share and compare their definitions with another pair.

5. SPELLING ALOUD

Using flashcards, as above, one pupil reads a word aloud. Their partner spells the word out loud. If they spell correctly, they 'win' the card. If they are incorrect, the card is put to the bottom of the pile. Pupils take turns and the 'winner' is the one who has most cards at the end of the game.

6. SPELLING TENNIS

You may have seen this one on the television programme 'Hardspell'. Older children really enjoy this one as it can be quite challenging. Pupils work in trios.

One takes on the role of both 'reader' and 'checker'. The other two pupils spell the word by saying alternative letters until the whole word is spelt. If a mistake is made, the checker stops the game and shows them the correct spelling. The word is then spelt again and then put to the bottom of the pile. Correct words are discarded. Pupils take turns to be the checker.

7. ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Pupils write out their spelling list in alphabetical order. This activity is best used with middle and upper stage pupils but is particularly effective at making them look closely at the spelling of words that begin with the same letter eg when learning common words. This could be an individual activity but, as a follow up activity, pupils could work together to check they both have the same order.

8. MUDDLED LETTERS

Pupils rewrite each of their spelling words in a muddled up fashion eg 'beautiful' could be written 'befitualu'. It is better if they always put the initial letter in the correct place. This is a great activity, as pupils have to scrutinise each word to make sure they have got all the correct letters. These muddled lists are then swapped with someone with same spelling words. Without looking at the correct list, pupils have to rewrite each word correctly.

9. DICTIONARY RACE

Pupils work in threes using a dictionary each. They take turns to call out one of their spelling words which is then hidden. The idea is to be the first to locate the word in the dictionary. This not only helps them to remember how to spell, it is also excellent for practising dictionary skills. You can turn it into a game by giving them counters to win.

10. SYLLABLES

Working in twos, pupils split their spelling words into syllables eg beau-ti-ful.

Again close attention to details is needed so it helps them to retain more difficult spellings.

11. WORDS WITHIN WORDS

Pupils try to find smaller words inside each of their spelling words without rearranging the letters. Eg using the word 'practising', you could find – 'act' 'sing' 'in' 'is'. Set a time limit, say 10 minutes, for them to work individually to find as many as possible using all their spelling words. Finish off with an oral feedback session to pull all their suggestions together.

12. SILLY STORY

Working in pairs, pupils write a short story (about a paragraph) using as many of their spelling words as possible. Again, set a time limit of about 10 minutes. Stories can be shared with another pair or with the whole class – the stories are usually very silly so children enjoy this activity.

13. KIM's GAME

This game can be played in groups of 4 to 6.

Spelling words are written on cards and laid out on the table. The pupils study the words. They then look away and a nominated person removes *one* of the cards. Pupils turn back, look at the remaining cards and have 2 minutes (use an egg timer) to write the missing word on a whiteboard which they keep hidden. All the guesses are then revealed at the same time. If they are correct, they win a point, but only if it is spelt correctly!

14. MAGNETIC LETTERS

Working with a partner, younger pupils would first look at a word from their list or from a flash card, cover it and then make their word using magnetic letters. This would continue until all the words are displayed. Another pair would then be asked to check their spellings.

15. WORDSEARCH

Using squared paper, pupils make a wordsearch with their spelling words. Words are NOT written out underneath. They need to look really closely to make sure that they haven't made a mistake and that they have included all their words.

For the next spelling session, wordsearches are swapped with another member of the same spelling group. Words are ringed and then written out underneath. How many can they find?

They are then swapped back and marked by the original owner of the wordsearch.

16. MNEMONICS

Show the children an example of a mnemonic and explain why they are used eg big elephants can always understand small elephants → **because**

Working with a partner, pupils try to make up a mnemonic for one or two of their trickiest spelling words. A time limit should be set – again about 10 minutes. Their mnemonics can then be shared with another pair, the whole group or displayed on the wall for everyone to use.

17. LUCKY DIP

This is a game best played in twos or threes. Pupils take turns to pick out 12 plastic letters from a bag. They mustn't look into the bag, as it is 'lucky dip'. The picked letters are placed in front of them and the rest of the letters are left in the bag. The idea is to make one of their spelling words out of the letters. The pupils take turns to pick one new letter out of the bag and discard one that they don't want any more. This carries on until someone has the right letters to make one of their spelling words. The others check that it is indeed spelt correctly. The game then starts over again.

18. GUESS THE WORD

Pupils work in pairs. One pupil chooses one of their spelling words, and then writes one letter on a whiteboard at a time. They can begin *anywhere* in the word – it does not have to be at the beginning. The other pupil tries to guess the word after each letter is added. If they guess correctly, they must spell the whole word to win the points. The fewer letters that have been given – the more points to be won.

19. CROSSWORD

Using squared paper, pupils make a crossword using their spelling words. Definitions are written below to form the clues. The children may have already written the definitions during a previous spelling session. During a further session, crosswords are swapped and completed by another member of the group. These would then be checked by the pupil who created the crossword.

20. NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

This is a very simple activity where pupils can work within mixed or same ability pairings. Pupils swap lists and ask their partner to spell one of the words. If the word is spelt correctly, the appropriate mark is placed on a noughts and crosses grid. If wrong, no mark is written but their mistake explained and the correct spelling shown. A 10-15 minute time limit is probably long enough to play several games.

21. WALK ABOUT

Don't be put off by the title. Children of all ages love this *and* it's very effective!

The whole class walks about the class with their list of words. When the teacher calls a set signal (eg 'spell'), each pupil greets the person nearest to them and swaps lists. By doing this all spelling abilities can work together. They then ask each other to spell 3 words from the list. If they are both correct, they swap the lists back again and move on. If one or more is wrong, they get one minute to study the words and are then asked again.

22. DRAGON'S DINNER

Pupils have counters, one for each of their target words. They take turns in spelling. If they make a misspelling, they lose a counter to the dragon. The dragon can be a pupil with a list of the words or all other pupils can have a list to check the words and the dragon can be a picture/model. How much dinner does the dragon get?

23. FIND THE WORD

This is a good activity for younger pupils who are learning how to spell High Frequency words. Each pair is given a highlighter pen and piece of text, for example a newspaper or advert. The teacher writes a few common words on the blackboard and the children highlight as many as they can find. Younger children may need to be given a highlighter each or you may ask that each common word is highlighted using a different colour.

This activity can also be used to highlight a spelling pattern in older classes eg 'ight' , 'ei/ie'.

Once highlighted, the words could be written in a list to share with another group.

24. JIGSAW

The teacher chooses one or two spelling words for each group and writes each of them onto a strip of card. This is repeated several times. Each card is then cut into sections – see below

H	i	p	p	o	t	a	m	u	s
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

H	i	p	p	o	t	a	m	u	s
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

H	i	p	p	o	t	a	m	u	s
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

H	i	p	p	o	t	a	m	u	s
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Pieces are then muddled up and given out to the pupils. They can either put them back together at their desks but its much more fun if they are each given one piece and they must then find their partners and stand in the correct order. It is trickier than it looks as there can be several combinations to make the correct spelling.

25. The weakest Link?

Just like the TV programme. Pupils work in groups of 4-8. Each person has a whiteboard. The 'presenter' has a list of words and displays a timer. Each person is asked a spelling in turn. They either write the spelling on the whiteboard or say it aloud. At the end of each 'round' each person uses their whiteboard to 'vote' off who they think is the 'weakest link' and a new round begins with a shorter time limit.

26. Spell, Spell, Trade

Each member of the group has one word on a piece of paper. The walk about until they meet another member of their group. They then ask each other to spell their word. If they get it wrong, they are shown the word and then try again. Once they have both spelled the word, they trade and go off to meet another person. All groups can play this at the same time just by colour coding the paper ie the pupils with the yellow cards only meet up with yellow cards.